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ABSTRACT

This article briefly discusses ways in which the study of foreign language contributes to the development of reading skills in the speaker's native language. Comments are directed to the following areas: (1) auditory discrimination, (2) visual discrimination, (3) association and insight, (4) the reading process, (5) expansion of vocabulary, (6) culture, (7) sound-symbol relationships, (8) morphological changes, (9) study skills, and (10) psychological impact. (RL)

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA, INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

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The study of a foreign language contributes to the development of reading skills in initial language learning in the following ways:

1. AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION

When a second language is taught according to audio-lingual principles, the development of the skill of sound discrimination in the student becomes a primary goal. This, in turn, leads the student to greater ease in the ability to distinguish between similar sounds in his mother tongue.
e.g. too, toe
live, lives

2. VISUAL DISCRIMINATION

Where an audio-lingual-visual approach to second language learning is adopted, the student is trained to observe analytically the visual stimuli, so that he will discover inductively the meanings of the sounds that accompany the visual cue. This analytical observation eventually leads to ease in distinguishing different characters in reading.

3. ASSOCIATION AND INSIGHT

Where the visual content is a highly developed, integral part of the second language instructional system, the student learns to interpret pictures. The visual also acts as a cue for memorization and recall, thereby enabling the student to develop his associative skills. This same device also gives the student practice in remembering and retelling a story. This skill can certainly be most valuable when applied to initial language learning, as well as to other disciplines.

In situations in which the teacher of a second language attempts to convey meaning of new lexical items and grammatical structures through pantomime, realia, synonyms, antonyms and definitions in the second language, the students' intuitive ability is developed.

4. THE READING PROCESS

Students who have not mastered the reading process, because of delayed reading readiness, can develop it through their second language experience where the hierarchy of listening, speaking, reading and writing is observed and adhered to. Having become aware of the reading process in the second language, they can then apply it to their reading experiences in the mother tongue. Thus, learning a second language can enable the student to approach the reading process by way of a new route.

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5. EXPANSION OF VOCABULARY

Teaching students Greek and Latin roots and affixes and relating these to English word formation expands the English vocabulary of students in a uniquely efficient way. The student's English vocabulary is also expanded through the study of a modern language when the teacher draws attention to cognates and words derived from that language in English. e.g. French - journal, cuisine

6. CULTURE

The novelty of another culture has a stimulating effect upon the student's imagination and desire to learn. The multi-ethnic aspects of other cultures broaden his cultural vista, so that he will become more appreciative of ethnic differences within his own immediate environment. This can also be helpful in raising the student's own self-concept.

7. SOUND-SYMBOL RELATIONSHIPS

The audio-lingual approach to the teaching of a second language recognizes the primacy of the spoken word, and, in so doing, develops in the student a strong awareness of sound-symbol relationships from the time of his very first contact with the written language. When this awareness is developed in the use of one language, it facilitates the learning of the phonetic system of another language.

8. MORPHOLOGICAL CHANGES

The recognition of structural changes, first through the auditory sense and then through the visual, develops the "language sense" of the student, enabling him to deal more easily with such changes in his native tongue.
e.g. I am
He is

9. STUDY SKILLS

The cumulative nature of second language learning is a process which necessitates constant and systematic study and drill involving all 4 language skills (understanding, speaking, reading and writing). When once the necessary study habits are established, students tend to apply them to other areas of the curriculum.

10. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Normally, the student comes to the study of a second language tabula rasa, in terms of previous knowledge, and yet more mature then when he began the study of his mother tongue. This provides him with a "new beginning" which offers him the opportunity to experience success. The taste of success instills new positive attitudes towards learning in general.

The contributions of second language learning to the student's command of communication skills in his first language are manifold. From the basic steps of listening and speaking to the more advanced levels of literature, learning experiences in a foreign language reenforce and enhance learning in the mother tongue.

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